

Questions Concerning Schools Receiving “Accreditation Denied” Status

What does it mean if my child’s school receives an “Accreditation Denied” rating?

Public schools in Virginia receive an accreditation rating each year based on results of tests given during the previous school year. For example, the accreditation rating for school year 2006-2007 is based on the results of tests given during the 2005-2006 school year.

Schools receive the rating of “Accreditation Denied” when students fail to achieve adjusted pass rates to meet the “fully accredited” rating for the current year as well as the preceding three consecutive years. The “Fully Accredited” rating means that students in the school achieved an adjusted pass rate of 75 percent in third-grade and fifth-grade English, 70 percent in mathematics, and 50 percent in third-grade science and history/social science. Otherwise, the student results must meet the pass rate of 70 percent in each of the four core academic areas - English, mathematics, history/social science.

If my child’s school is denied accreditation, does that mean my child is not getting a good education?

Accreditation ratings reflect overall achievement, not the performance or learning of individual students. As a parent, you also should consider your child’s individual achievement on SOL tests, classroom grades, and other measures of learning and performance in assessing the quality of the education your children are receiving.

If my child’s school is denied accreditation, does that mean the state is going to take over my child’s school?

The Virginia constitution acknowledges the state’s leadership role in establishing overall policy and in providing direction, financial assistance, and technical and advisory services related to public schools while preserving local initiative and autonomy. Through the General Assembly, Virginia mandates standards for public schools; through the Virginia Board of Education, it supervises the operation of the public school system. Application of these state standards and policies, as well as the daily management of public schools, however, remains the responsibility of the localities.

Because the state constitution gives local school boards the responsibility of the day-to-day operations of schools within a division, the Virginia Department of Education or the Virginia Board of Education cannot “take over” a public school.

If my child’s school receives an “Accreditation Denied” rating, what will happen?

The school receiving an “Accreditation Denied” rating must provide parents of the enrolled students:

- ★ within 30 days, written notice of the school’s accreditation rating
- ★ a copy of the school division’s proposed corrective action plan that includes a timeline for implementation
- ★ an opportunity for public comment on the proposed corrective action plan

After considering public comment, the school division will finalize the school’s corrective action plan. Then the local school board and the Virginia Board of Education will sign a memorandum of understanding on or before November 1.

The memorandum of understanding may include, but is not limited to:

- ★ an educational service delivery and management review approved by the Virginia Board of Education
- ★ employing an approved turnaround specialist to address conditions preventing educational progress, effectiveness and academic success

In addition to the memorandum of understanding, the local school board will submit periodic status reports - signed by the school principal, division superintendent and local school board chair - to the Virginia Board of Education.

A school division having one or more schools with an “Accreditation Denied” rating will be required to

submit a report to the Board of Education on or before October 1 that will contain information on each school's progress toward meeting the "Fully Accredited" requirements. The Virginia Board of Education will include the reports in its annual report to the governor and General Assembly on the condition and needs of public education to the governor and the General Assembly on November 15.

If a school division has one-third or more of its schools rated "Accreditation Denied," the local school board must evaluate the superintendent and submit a copy of the evaluation to the Virginia Board of Education by December 1. In addition, the Virginia Board of Education may take action against the local school board, as permitted by the Standards of Quality, for failure to maintain accredited schools.

Are there any other options if my child's school is denied accreditation?

A local school board may choose to close the school, combine the school with a higher performing school in the division, or reconstitute a school. Reconstitution is "a process that may be used to initiate a range of accountability actions to improve pupil performance, curriculum, and instruction to address deficiencies that caused a school to be rated "Accreditation Denied" which may include, but not be limited to, restructuring a school's governance, instructional program, staff or student population."

If a local school board chooses to reconstitute a school, the local school board may apply to the Virginia Board of Education for a rating of "Conditionally Accredited." The application must outline specific responses to all areas of deficiency.

For a reconstituted school, the local school board may apply annually for a "Conditionally Accredited" rating for no more than three years if the school is making progress toward a rating of "Fully Accredited" and meeting the terms of the Virginia Board of Education's reconstitution application.

However, the school will receive an "Accreditation Denied" rating if it fails to meet the requirements to be rated "Fully Accredited" after three years or if it fails to have its annual application renewed.

Is the staff at my child's school going to be replaced because of the "Accreditation Denied" rating?

There may be some personnel changes in your child's school, but that decision will be made by the local school division. School staffing is the responsibility of the local school board.

What happens if my child's school closes?

Your child will continue to receive a public school education, but at a different school. Your local school division will be able to tell you where your child will be attending school.

Can I request a transfer for my child to a school that is "Fully Accredited?"

You would need to contact your child's school division and ask about local policies regarding your request to transfer.

What can I, as a parent, do if I receive notification that my child's school is denied accreditation?

Talk with your child's teacher to see what you can do to help increase or maintain your child's academic level. Attend any meetings held by the PTA, local school officials, or division officials concerning your child's school. Share your comments and concerns with your school officials and local school board.

If my child's high school is not fully accredited, will that impact my child's ability to get into college?

The accreditation status of a high school does not appear on your child's transcripts that are provided to colleges, universities, or employers. Your child's diploma is recognized as equal to any other Virginia diploma of the same type, regardless of the school's accreditation status.

Colleges and universities look at a variety of factors such as SAT or ACT results, individual SOL test results, types of courses and rigor of courses taken in high school, grade-point average and class ranking when making acceptance decisions.